

# MHR *Connections*

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*Elder Art Shofley, Janet Baldwin and Jerry Woods take part in the ceremonies.*

## 6th Annual Bear Clan Gathering honours peacekeepers and warriors

The 2007 Annual Bear Clan Gathering began with a Grand Entry and closed four days later with a pipe ceremony paying homage to fallen comrades.

The Bear Clan Gathering honours First Nations peacekeepers as well as the police, fire fighters, Canadian Armed Forces, CF Cadets, and other caregivers and first responders. The Commission's Chairperson Jerry Woods was Master of Ceremonies, and one of the special guests was Past Chairperson Janet Baldwin, who says she was honoured to be invited.

The Bear Clan Gathering stems from the First Nations traditional system of governance, which designated seven Clans to provide leadership, support and security to First Nations communities. Members of the Bear Clan are the peacekeepers and warriors, and are also responsible for the medicines. Over the years the First Nations began to embrace and include the peacekeepers and warriors of Canadian society.

The Grand Entry on the first day featured the arrival of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the groups being honoured. This was followed by dancers, drummers, presentations and a traditional feast, sponsored by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Winnipeg Police Service.

The second day was dedicated to women and children and began with a Children's Grand Entry. The third day, called Sacred Fire, included a Memorial Service where guests presented a food offering to the Sacred Fire for family and friends who have passed away. On the fourth and final day, a moment of silence honoured fallen comrades and a Pipe Ceremony prepared the Bear Spirits for their winter's sleep.



*Aboriginal police officer Ken Anderson receives an award from the Aboriginal Veterans for community service.*

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### The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson The Demands of Leadership

Earlier this month, along with many other groups and individuals, the Commission addressed the City of Winnipeg on the topic of the qualities a new Police Chief should possess. The public was asked to determine what standards, skills and characteristics should be considered.

I am a member of the Bear Clan from the Couchiching First Nation. The Bear Clan members, in Aboriginal tradition, are the caregivers and peace-makers. I mention this because historically in Aboriginal societies the emphasis was on keeping the peace rather than on enforcing the law. Personally, I prefer the first option.

On behalf of the Commission, I took the message we have been receiving from our neighbourhood consultations on racialized communities and police service. The message is clear. People want change. They want to find new and effective ways to build a level of trust between themselves and the police. They also want recognition of the uniqueness of communities. Many believe that this can be accomplished by returning to the spirit of community policing.

Our community consultations are over, but the research project on racialized communities and police services is not. I stressed at the City Hall meeting the importance of incorporating the perspectives of the police in this study. We have opened the door for the successful candidate to become directly involved.

In Ontario last March, on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, a new partnership between the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Toronto City Police was announced after the Commission had completed a project, which solicited the views and experiences of racialized communities, as we are doing. Toronto City Police Chief Bill Blair said, "If we lose our trust, we lose our moral authority and legal authority to police the city." He also said "that there is nothing more corrosive to our relationship with diverse communities than the perception the police are acting with a bias."

It is important that the successful candidate respect diversity and have the experience, skills, commitment and a proven track record in promoting the equitable provision of police services to all communities. True leadership demands nothing less.

## Commission urges Government of Canada to reconsider its position

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission has urged the Government of Canada to withdraw its opposition to the adoption of the existing draft of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations.

The Declaration was approved on September 13, 2007, after 143 Member States voted in favour, 11 abstained and four – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States – voted against its adoption.

In a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Chairperson Jerry Woods expressed the Commission's disappointment in learning that Canada led the vote against the Declaration. "I am even more concerned," he wrote "that by continuing to call for renegotiation of the Declaration before the General Assembly has a chance to vote on it, Canadian officials are putting the final adoption of the much needed human rights instrument in jeopardy."

According to the letter, the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN Human Rights Council was an important step in building global

protection for the rights of indigenous peoples and represented the culmination of more than twenty years of international consultation, in which Canada played a significant role.

The letter also compared Indigenous peoples around the world to Canada's Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis peoples who face prejudice, discrimination and violations of human rights stating, "Many endure higher levels of poverty, worse living conditions, and far less control over their lives and land than do non-Aboriginal Canadians."

Canada's official position indicated a number of concerns with the provisions of the Declaration. These concerns included that the provisions were too broad and could be interpreted in such a way as to be a threat to existing national efforts to balance Aboriginal claims for land and self government with competing national interests.

The Commission believes these concerns are not valid, considering the nature and content of the draft declaration. Its letter stated, "the Declaration is simply a tool for interpreting the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights as it applies to indigenous peoples. It is not a document that creates new rights, but simply clarifies obligations Canada has already undertaken."

The Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the Yukon Human Rights Commission hold the same position as Manitoba, and have sent similar letters to the Prime Minister.

## New Commissioner raised on a Zimbabwe Reserve

Like most boys in his community near Gwanda, Zimbabwe, Mzilikazi Ndlovu (Mzi) learned many survival skills including herding cattle, knocking birds from the sky with a sling shot, making bricks and carving implements out of tree branches. Mzilikazi was raised in Matshetsheni Trust Land, a reserve community where entertainment consisted of singing acappella and sliding down a mountain slope on a flat rock.

Although formal education was non-existent on the reserve, Mzilikazi's parents, whose way of life depended on subsistence farming, struggled to send their seven children to a handful of schools across the province of Matabeleland. Mzilikazi, being the eldest, was sent to Canada to be educated and find work so that he could help his family financially.

Mzilikazi spent four years at the University of Winnipeg and pursued a liberal arts education, majoring in political science. He became active in the African Student Association and was Vice-President for four years. For a time he also managed the Telephone Centre, an organization within the University Relations Department. This centre was designed to raise funds for the Alumni Entrance Scholarship Program (AWSP). He personally raised \$100,000. While at the University he was also instrumental in founding two initiatives; the Food Bank and the Safe Walk Program.

During the period of 1993 to 2005, Mzilikazi produced and hosted the radio show *The African Summit* on CKUW, the University of Winnipeg's community radio station. In addition to addressing some of the most challenging social and economical themes emerging from developing world, *The African Summit* introduced the listener to the very best of world music.

During his years in Winnipeg, Mzilikazi has freelanced with many organizations including: the CBC, Spence Neighborhood Association, the City of Winnipeg, Society of Manitobans with Disabilities, Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, Manitoba Métis Federation, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, Wellington West Capital Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada and the University of Winnipeg. He now works for Winnipeg Child and Family Services.

Mzilikazi says the Commission can and should play a major role in finding a path that brings people together. He is excited about sitting on the Board of Commissioners saying that, "education, understanding, respect and the opportunity to interact, relate and work together are the main tools for eliminating isolation and racial discrimination."

**Legal Education and Action Fund Foundation  
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October 18, 2007 7:15 – 9:00 am  
Winnipeg Convention Centre  
Guest Speaker Mary Eberts – Equality Rights Lawyer  
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